

State Board Retreat

The State Board of Education/State Board for Vocational Education held a retreat Thursday, November 5, 2015 in Conference Room One of the Hyatt Place in Dewey Beach, Delaware. The retreat session began at 9:20 a.m. The following Board members were in attendance: Dr. Teri Quinn Gray, President; Jorge Melendez, Vice President; G. Patrick Heffernan, and Nina Lou Bunting. Donna R. Johnson, State Board Executive Director, and Deputy Attorney General Ilona Kirshon were also present.

Others in attendance included Dr. Steven Godowsky, Secretary of Education; Susan Haberstroh, Department of Education, Shana Young, Department of Education, Dr. Joseph Pika, WEIC, Dr. Henry Harper, WEIC, Kelly Sherretz, WEIC, Elizabeth Burland, WEIC, Tony Allen, WEIC and Bill Doolittle.

There was a brief review of items on the retreat agenda which included WEIC and the Board's policy agenda going forward for the next 18th months. The Board also planned to discuss DSSF and accountability and the Board's strategic plan.

The Board discussed the four core areas of its strategic plan and that it was critical that the Board continues its focus even after the change in administration. There was discussion on the Board's governance and procedures. Board members were reminded of their responsibility to listen to the meeting recordings when absent and that approval of the minutes is to acknowledge that the minutes reflect what transpired at the meeting. Board members do not have to present to approve minutes from regular meetings. It was noted that work sessions and retreats are not recorded and thus abstaining when not present is appropriate.

Ms. Johnson provided the Board with the dates of public hearings for WEIC as well as dates for charter public hearings that are scheduled. Board members were asked to designate which hearings they could attend. It was also suggested that an alternate be assigned as well. Board members were also reminded to review their SBE emails at least twice a week and to provide the State Board office with the two days of the week they will routinely check their email.

Ms. Johnson highlighted some of the planned sessions the State Board will schedule for local board members and its stakeholders as part of its grant with NASBE. Future workshops will focus on Next Generation Science Standards, Data Privacy – Part 2 and Early Childhood Literacy. There was also discussion on using social media. The Board currently has a Twitter account and agreed to ask Ms. Johnson and DAG Kirshon to explore the possibility of a Facebook account and to discuss it with Secretary Collins at DTI.

After a break, the Board continued its discussion on its policy agenda with discussions on college access, remedial courses, and CTE pathways. Ms. Johnson noted that the SREO was reviewing CTE pathways. Ms. Johnson also reviewed possible changes to code and regulations for licensure and certification as the elimination of some current limitations in the law to act on a suspension/revocation of a license.

After lunch, Bill Doolittle distributed a handout to the Board that he considered background information concerning WEIC. He acknowledged that he knew the comment period was not open but he wanted the Board to receive this information and would be resubmitting it once public comment is open.

Dr. Dan Rich, Dr. Joseph Pika, Dr. Henry Harper and Mr. Tony Allen were present and distributed the draft City of Wilmington Redistrict Plan and Implementation Plan to the State Board and the appendices. Discussion focused on the work of the two committees, Redistricting and Funding. It was noted that the students in Wilmington are in four districts and the 9 charter schools in the City of Wilmington. There are also 9 charter schools in the vicinity and one vocational district. There was concern expressed for ELL students, low SES students and students of color noting that this is a statewide issue not just a City of Wilmington issue. Board members questioned how changing district lines is going to impact student learning. WEIC members responded that reducing fragmentation and obtaining resources and community support would have an impact. There was discussion on gaps, the numbers of students in the City of Wilmington and comparisons of those students. The Board asked for a comparison of the City students compared against themselves and not the state. The Board also asked about recommendations on funding the plan. WEIC responded that the recommendations of the Commission on Education Funding Improvement would play a role. There was discussion by the Board and WEIC representatives on parent engagement and community support. Dr. Pika voiced his concerns about the students in Christina during the redistricting transition and planning. He also spoke of challenges and expectations. Discussion continued on clear measures. The Board stated that the top priority is student learning and teachers prepared to teach no matter the district. The WEIC representatives were thanked for making this presentation.

Secretary Godowsky highlighted his meeting with the Chief School Officers Association and his meeting with the College Board. There may be a proposal to use SAT scores instead of Smarter Balanced this spring for Grade 11. He also discussed this with the teachers of the year and there is wide support for this change. This would also reduce the number of testing days for 11th Grade.

Ryan Reyna presented the recommendations around the Delaware School Success Framework and changes to the rewards and unintended consequences. The Board viewed a sample high school framework. The Board requested full transparency on the framework and that no data be hidden. The challenge becomes how to put all this information on two pages. There was discussion on having some things on the website.

The retreat session was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.